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Chair: Ms. King ..... (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Organization of work (A/C.5/71/L.29)

1. **The Chair** said that, in the face of persistent structural impediments such as the late issuance of documentation, the Committee should move forward with optimism and a sense of purpose as it strove to complete its work at the second part of the resumed seventy-first session, recalling its essential purpose of ensuring the implementation of the objectives and mandates emanating from the Charter, its leadership role in solving global problems, and the immediate consequences for peace and security of failing to act responsibly, effectively and efficiently. The Committee must also find ways to cope with setbacks while forging ahead in a spirit of collaboration and compromise, with a view to progressively achieving its goals.

2. She invited the Committee to consider the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work for the second part of the resumed seventy-first session, prepared on the basis of the note by the Secretariat on the status of preparedness of documentation (A/C.5/71/L.29).

3. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, paid tribute to the men and women serving in peacekeeping operations, in particular those who had lost their lives in the service of peace and security.

4. While the Group acknowledged the efforts of the Bureau of the Committee to disseminate information as soon as possible, it was regrettable that a number of reports to be considered at the second part of the resumed session had been issued late or had not been translated into all official languages in a timely manner, which hampered delegations' preparations for their deliberations. He underscored the importance of multilingualism in that regard. The unfortunate tendency for peacekeeping budgets to be submitted late, in breach of the six-week rule established by the General Assembly, reduced the time available for delegations to consider the financing and policy aspects of peacekeeping operations. The Secretariat should continue its efforts to comply with General Assembly resolutions on the matter. It was also a matter of concern that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions was expected to deal with increasing numbers of reports within the same meeting time that it had been allocated years earlier.

5. The Group attached great importance to consideration of the administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of peacekeeping operations, in particular cross-cutting issues, closed peacekeeping missions and the peacekeeping support account. At the current part of the resumed session, the Group would focus on a number of issues: ensuring that peacekeeping budgets were based on mission mandates and the real situation on the ground and were not approached as an arbitrary, across-the-board cost-cutting exercise; exploring options to find a fair solution to address unpaid assessments, accounts payable and other liabilities of closed peacekeeping missions so as to settle outstanding claims in missions with cash deficits; providing technical support for applying rules and regulations on reducing the environmental footprint of peacekeeping operations through concrete measures to be implemented across all missions; and reducing unfilled vacancies, including by enacting measures to facilitate the recruitment of personnel from all regions.

6. **Mr. Funes Henriquez** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC attached the utmost importance to the administrative and budgetary aspects of United Nations peacekeeping operations; it was vital for those operations to have the necessary resources to implement their mandates.

7. CELAC looked forward to discussing the issue of the financing of individual peacekeeping operations, in particular the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), currently entering the drawdown phase, and the newly established United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), as well as cross-cutting issues and the support account. CELAC was proud of the work done by MINUSTAH, including the exemplary operational performance of its military component, and underscored the need to protect the gains achieved by the mission, particularly in the area of security. In that regard, MINUJUSTH would receive the same support from CELAC that MINUSTAH had historically received. Community violence reduction programmes and quick-impact projects should be maintained by MINUJUSTH, in view of their critical role in supporting core stabilization objectives in Haiti, particularly consolidation of the rule of law.

8. As each peacekeeping operation had a stand-alone budget, approved in accordance with its mandate and specific needs, peacekeeping budgets must be considered individually to ensure the effective and efficient discharge of their respective mandates and adequate provision of resources to support their activities, with a view to strengthening the peacekeeping agenda.

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9. It was regrettable that the Committee had been unable to agree on the necessary reform of the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions. The current administrative and budgetary arrangements for those missions were inadequate, and had an adverse impact on the regular budget and the accountability, governance and transparency of the Organization. The deficiencies of the current arrangements must be corrected, as called for by the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee and the Board of Auditors.

10. By its resolution 65/293, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals to address the issue of outstanding amounts due to Member States from closed peacekeeping missions that were in net cash deficit. The relevant current and previous reports must be considered and the issue resolved; Member States in arrears to closed missions must meet their financial obligations. Lastly, the Committee must complete its work on time and, to that end, the Secretariat should make every effort to submit reports within set deadlines in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

11. **Ms. Nalwanga** (Uganda), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group was committed to supporting initiatives aimed at promoting international peace and security, in particular peacekeeping missions. It was grateful to all personnel involved in peacekeeping operations and paid special tribute to United Nations and African Union peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the service of peace.

12. The Group was concerned that a substantial number of reports had been submitted late and had not been translated into all official languages in a timely manner. It expected that the programme of work would be updated regularly to take into account progress made in negotiations and that Member States would be given adequate time to consider reports thoroughly. The Secretariat must ensure that the six-week rule for the distribution of required documents was observed.

13. The Group would scrutinize the budget proposals for peacekeeping missions to ensure that the challenges faced by such missions were addressed, particularly in the areas of security and safety; facilities and infrastructure, including accommodations; logistical support; and medical structures and support.

14. The integrity of the United Nations depended on its ability to deliver its core mandates successfully, which entailed the protection of civilians, human rights and the environment. With resources becoming increasingly scarce, the Organization should explore ways to improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, while also ensuring that missions were adequately resourced to address new challenges.

15. The total proposed resource requirements for the 2017/18 period amounted to $7.972 billion, inclusive of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi and the support account, and exclusive of voluntary contributions in kind. That represented an increase of $82.7 million, or 1.0 per cent, in comparison with the approved resources for the 2016/17 period. Noting that the figures contained in the overview report on the financing of peacekeeping operations (A/71/809) were subject to change on the basis of ongoing developments on the ground in certain missions and the deliberations of the Security Council, the Group trusted that information on the impact of such changes would be provided to the Committee during the current part of the resumed session. It also stressed that budget rules would not be modified to accommodate presumed changes still to be negotiated by the Council.

16. The Group attached great importance to the allocation of adequate resources to peacekeeping operations, specifically to those in Africa, taking into account the complexity of their mandates and the unique challenges faced on the ground. Consideration of peacekeeping budgets should not be approached as a simple cost-reduction exercise, but as a responsible exercise in mandate implementation, resource allocation and policy guidance. In that regard, the Group would review performance reports and budget proposals for all closed and active missions, including the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), the Regional Service Centre and the United Nations Logistics Base, in conjunction with the findings of oversight bodies and the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

17. The Group would also monitor cross-cutting issues linked to individual mandates, including mission support, Umoja implementation, facilities and infrastructure, oversight, supply chain management, environmental and waste management, and implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Peace Operations. Given their importance for promoting sustainable peace in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, quick-impact projects and programmatic activities should play a more prominent role in peacekeeping operations. Lastly, the Group would examine the Secretary-General's planned reform initiatives, while noting that such initiatives must be implemented with the approval of the General Assembly.

18. The Committee had a heavy workload, but must complete its work on time so as not to affect the work of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. Lastly, the Committee should conduct its work in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, and refrain from negotiations in small configurations behind closed doors.

19. **Mr. De Preter** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the States members of the European Union would continue to do what was necessary to ensure that United Nations peacekeeping served to maintain peace and security in a rapidly changing international environment. They recognized the sacrifices made by peacekeepers and paid tribute to those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

20. As the largest collective financial contributor to peacekeeping, the States members of the European Union attached great importance to effective collaboration between all Member States and the Secretariat. The European Union would closely examine the budgets of all peacekeeping missions, including support functions, with a view to providing them with adequate resources to carry out their mandates.

21. He called on all Committee members to work in a spirit of pragmatism to ensure the timely conclusion of negotiations. Should the Committee be forced to continue its deliberations into June, it must be during normal working hours and with the provision of appropriate conference services and the essential support of the Committee secretariat.

22. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea** (Mexico) said that the Committee would be responsible for ensuring that peacekeeping operations had the financial resources needed to fulfil their mandates in situations of increasing complexity and security risks. Mexico appreciated the contributions of civil, military and police personnel participating in peacekeeping missions worldwide.

23. His delegation would carefully consider the reports on the budget performance of peacekeeping missions and the Secretary-General's proposals. In particular, it would seek to ensure that MINUSTAH was provided with adequate resources to address challenges on the ground. It welcomed the progress made towards institutional normalization and the restoration of constitutional order in Haiti, while underscoring the importance of the ongoing presence and involvement of the international community and assurances of continued United Nations support for Haiti. In that regard, the transition to MINUJUSTH must be carried out responsibly and gradually to ensure the continuation of the vital activities of the United Nations system. Haiti must be supported in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including through building its public health capacities, ensuring the reintegration of returnees, and improving water and sanitation, education, and transportation infrastructure.

24. His delegation would closely examine the Secretary-General's proposed measures for responding to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse with a view to fully implementing the Organization's zero-tolerance policy. In particular, it would focus on assisting victims, ending impunity, promoting the involvement of civil society and external partners, and strengthening strategic communications to enhance awareness and transparency.

25. His Government was committed to contributing human and financial resources to peacekeeping operations. Member States must pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions, and all outstanding dues to the Organization must be paid. In that regard, he recalled that the scale of assessments adopted by the General Assembly was designed to reflect Member States' capacity to pay and the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security.

26. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Secretariat and the entire United Nations system in responding to challenges under the three pillars of the Organization. Discussions in that regard must take into account the recommendations of, inter alia, the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture and the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, including with respect to the ongoing reform of the current dysfunctional arrangements for the funding and backstopping of special political missions.

27. Work under the peace and security pillar must focus on increasing transparency and accountability, while also strengthening prevention, inclusion, development, political solutions and human rights in the broadest sense. Those elements were essential to creating a United Nations suited to the twenty-first century and should guide the Committee in developing a creative vision for achieving change that was beneficial to all stakeholders.

28. **Mr. Fu** Dapeng (China) said that peacekeeping operations were critical for maintaining international peace and security. China — the second largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget and a major troop contributor, with around 2,600 peacekeepers active in various operations — strongly supported United Nations peacekeeping and paid tribute to all mission personnel.

29. The Committee should take a practical, scientific and prudent approach to peacekeeping budgeting to ensure that missions were given adequate resources to support the Organization's role in maintaining peace and security. To that end, peacekeeping budgets should not be subject to arbitrary reductions or impractical increases.

30. The mandates of peacekeeping operations and their respective budgets should respect the sovereignty of host countries and reflect their views and needs. As troop- and police-contributing countries had made significant contributions to United Nations peacekeeping, the Organization should reimburse their peacekeeping expenses in a timely manner and give priority to their candidates in the recruitment of peacekeeping staff.

31. Peacekeeping capacities should be improved to reduce waste, promote efficient resource utilization and optimize logistical support mechanisms. The Secretariat must strengthen internal management and exercise budgetary discipline in order to make effective use of every cent contributed by Member States. Member States must also pay their peacekeeping assessments on time, in full and without conditions to ensure the Organization's financial health and the effective implementation of peacekeeping mandates.

32. His delegation regretted the delayed issuance of documentation for the current part of the resumed session and hoped that the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee would take measures to improve the quality, reduce the length and ensure the timely distribution of reports.

33. **Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan) said that the singular role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security was particularly critical in the light of increasingly complex threats and challenges to peace. The continued rise in demand for peacekeeping activities attested to the high level of confidence, trust and faith in the United Nations and its positive impact on the lives of millions worldwide.

34. Pakistan was one of the largest and most consistent contributors to peacekeeping, having participated in 41 missions in 23 countries since 1960. Over 7,000 Pakistani peacekeepers were currently active in various operations, and 144 had made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. The pledges made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan in support of peacekeeping operations at the 2015 Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping were a testament to her country's continued commitment to United Nations peacekeeping.

35. Her delegation took note of the Secretary-General's recent announcement of his intention to reform the Organization's peace and security architecture. While the cost effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping was commendable, continuously asking peacekeepers to do more with less was unsustainable. Credible action must be taken to provide missions with adequate resources to fulfil their mandates and to establish realistic and permanent mechanisms for reviewing and updating reimbursements to States that provided troops and contingent-owned equipment.

36. Effectively confronting challenges to peacekeeping would require the continued political commitment of Member States. Improved "triangular" cooperation between troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat in all aspects of mandate development, implementation and review, especially in the case of rapidly deteriorating situations on the ground, was also required. In addition, the protection of civilians must be guaranteed by establishing clearly defined peacekeeping mandates; preventing the outbreak of armed conflicts and addressing their root causes; and finding inclusive and lasting political solutions to conflicts. Troop-contributing countries should be represented at the leadership and senior levels in the field and at Headquarters in a manner commensurate with their contributions to peacekeeping. Lastly, the Organization must take a capability-driven approach to peacekeeping by providing missions with well-trained and well-equipped peacekeepers and strengthening partnerships with regional and subregional organizations.

37. Increasingly overstretched capacity, particularly in field deployments, compromised the objectives of peacekeeping missions, complicated exit strategies and jeopardized the safety and security of peacekeepers. Rather than cutting costs, adequate resources should be allocated for the operational deployment of peacekeeping forces, particularly in hostile environments. Pakistan would continue to serve as an agent of peace and security for those affected by conflict.

38. **Mr. Matjila** (South Africa) said that delays in the preparation of documentation prevented the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee from adequately examining reports.

39. In line with the recommendations of recent high-level reviews of peace operations, prevention and mediation should be prioritized in peace and security efforts, particularly given the high cost of peacekeeping and humanitarian responses and the need to protect development gains. Political solutions should also remain the ultimate objective of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Such operations nevertheless played a critical role in maintaining international peace and security through supporting political and peace processes authorized by the Security Council. They should therefore be given the necessary resources, entrusted with appropriate mandates and adequately equipped to protect themselves and discharge their mandates. Thus, while his delegation stood ready to consider the related budget proposals, it would not support arbitrary efficiency gains or forced budget reductions that compromised the effectiveness, efficiency and credibility of peacekeeping operations.

40. He welcomed the progress made in strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, in particular the signing of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which recognized that preventing and resolving peace and security challenges in Africa exceeded the capacity of any single organization. He also looked forward to the submission of the Secretary-General's report on options for joint planning, mandating and financing of African Union peace support operations by the African Union and the Security Council, in line with Security Council resolution 2320 (2016), and reiterated that assessed contributions were the most reliable and sustainable source of support for such operations. The commitment to meaningful cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union reflected in Security Council resolutions 1809 (2008) and 2033 (2012) should be maintained and translated into practical steps to ensure that peacekeeping missions in Africa had the capacity required to fulfil their mandates.

41. He paid tribute to the men and women serving in United Nations and African Union peacekeeping operations, in particular those who had made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace and security. In order to ensure that troops operated in secure environments, they should be able to use all available resources, including technology, to enhance their effectiveness in responding to asymmetrical threats. The deployment of the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) provided a credible example of success in that regard.

42. In line with its commitment to mainstreaming gender in conflict prevention, resolution and mediation, South Africa had increased the number of women that it deployed in peacekeeping operations, in particular in senior leadership positions. He encouraged all Member States to contribute more female personnel to peacekeeping missions and to strengthen gender mainstreaming in leadership positions in the Secretariat. Lastly, his delegation attached high importance to the zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations and had taken timely and decisive action against the perpetrators of such abuses.

43. **Mr. Minami** (Japan) said that his delegation strongly supported United Nations peacekeeping operations. While necessary resources should be provided to ensure the successful implementation of peacekeeping mandates, efficient, effective and accountable management of peacekeeping operations was crucial, particularly as the related budgets were funded by the taxpayers of Member States. More importantly, having redundant resources that were not properly managed would undermine the effective operations and long-term sustainability of the Organization. The Committee should reach agreement on budget levels that would meet the actual requirements of each mission, by examining the levels of civilian staff and operational costs and the success of efficiency measures.

44. Assessed contributions should be used only for activities or outputs that were determined appropriate for funding by all Member States on the basis of the related mandates. The Committee must scrutinize the resource requirements proposed by the Secretary-General to ensure that they corresponded strictly to the mandates approved by the Organization's intergovernmental bodies. Lastly, consideration of other items at the second part of the resumed session should be deferred until after the deliberations on peacekeeping budgets, in order to guarantee their timely conclusion.

45. **Ms. Norman Chalet** (United States of America) paid tribute to the men and women who had served in peacekeeping missions, including those who had given their lives in the cause of peace. The United States supported the Secretary-General's efforts to enhance the capacity of missions to respond to evolving conditions and threats on the ground. It attached great importance to initiatives to improve performance in the field, including by developing capabilities and strengthening accountability for poor performance and misconduct, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse. Her delegation would also continue to support efforts

to strengthen leadership, improve planning and analysis, and integrate modern technology in peacekeeping missions, and looked forward to the Secretary-General's proposals on how to reconfigure the United Nations peace and security architecture to better support field missions.

46. The United States would examine peacekeeping mandates to ensure that they were fit for purpose, achievable and in line with realities on the ground. When peacekeeping was not the most appropriate tool for promoting collective security interests, other options should be considered, and, in situations where missions fulfilled a genuine need, they must demonstrate concrete results, in view of the significant investments made by Member States. In that regard, her delegation would closely examine the Secretary-General's request for $7.97 billion for peacekeeping in 2017/18, which represented a 1 per cent increase over the budget for 2016/17. Peacekeeping budgets should represent actual requirements, be based on realistic planning assumptions and reflect efficiencies gained through ongoing management initiatives. While the 2017/18 budget proposal provided for expansions in some of the most challenging, insecure missions, it also reflected requirements for long-standing missions that were ripe for change.

47. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) underscored the need to ensure that peacekeeping operations were provided with adequate resources and that peacekeeping budgets were based on mission mandates and the real situation on the ground. He thanked the Department of Field Support for organizing the annual field trip for Committee members.

48. As a troop-contributing country and founding member of the United Nations, Paraguay had consistently promoted the effective implementation of peacekeeping mandates and was deeply committed to the principles of the Charter, as evidenced by its participation in six active peacekeeping missions. He concluded by recognizing the sacrifices made by peacekeepers, including those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

49. **Mr. Burity** (Angola) paid tribute to United Nations uniformed and civilian personnel, particularly those who had paid the ultimate price. He said that, in an era of increasingly scarce resources, efficiency must be increased and accountability strengthened. At the same time, missions must be provided with the resources required to discharge their mandates. His delegation attached particular importance to the financing of MONUSCO, UNSOS, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The General Assembly had repeatedly indicated that peacekeeping budget proposals must be based on existing mandates approved by the Security Council. That meant presenting a budget that covered a 12-month period, together with a request for full assessment. His delegation would not agree to an approach that prejudged any mandate. In considering peacekeeping budget proposals, the Committee should take into account the specific mandate and unique circumstances of each mission.

50. The late issuance of documentation, which impeded the timely consideration of matters before the Committee, should be addressed as a matter of priority, and all documentation should be available by the second week of May 2017. The conduct of deliberations should be inclusive and transparent. Negotiations in small configurations were inefficient and created mistrust among delegations. The Committee should avoid practices that undermined intergovernmental processes. In addition to political support, the Committee must provide adequate resources to peacekeeping and special political missions in a timely manner.

51. **Mr. Khalizov** (Russian Federation) said that the second part of the resumed session traditionally focused on the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations, and the Committee had a large number of reports on that subject to consider within a limited time frame. Documents must be submitted to the Member States in a timely manner, in accordance with current procedures. The total requirements for peacekeeping operations and their supporting bodies in the note by the Secretary-General on proposed budgetary levels for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/C.5/71/21) were $7.97 billion, considerably more than the level set by the General Assembly for the current period. The Committee must study ways of limiting increases in peacekeeping appropriations, in particular for support activities, without adversely affecting the performance of the missions' basic political functions. In identifying savings, the Committee should compare the size of missions and their ability to absorb funding shortages. The financial and human resources available to small operations, in particular those whose staffing had already been subject to the review procedure, should not be decreased, to avoid hindering the fulfilment of Security Council mandates.

52. The discussions regarding cross-cutting issues in peacekeeping would be difficult. The Committee must evaluate progress in the implementation of the instructions contained in General Assembly resolution 70/286. His delegation was concerned about the lack of transparency related to the costs of and lessons learned from the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in field missions, the increase in expenditure on environmental protection projects and the lack of clarity in the methodology for realizing the benefits of the global field support strategy. Serious analysis of the Secretary-General's proposals related to sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly those that would result in the establishment of temporary posts, was required. His delegation would verify that such initiatives complied with international law and with the agreements between the United Nations and countries that contributed peacekeeping contingents, and would request detailed justification of additional resource requirements, given the complex situations faced by Member States in financing peacekeeping.

53. **The Chair** said that she took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed programme of work on the understanding that adjustments would be made as necessary during the course of the session.

54. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 132: Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (*continued*)

(b) United Nations peacekeeping operations
(A/71/5 (Vol. II)), A/71/801 and A/71/845)

55. **Mr. Bajaj** (Chair of the Audit Operations Committee of the Board of Auditors), introducing the financial report and audited financial statements for the 12-month period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 and report of the Board of Auditors on United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/71/5 (Vol. II)), said that although the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) had posed challenges to the Administration and the Board in the previous reporting period, the Administration had made progress in using the new accounting and reporting frameworks in the period under review. The Board had issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements, which presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the United Nations peacekeeping operations as at 30 June 2016 and their financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with IPSAS. The overall peacekeeping budget for the financial year 2015/16 had been $8.3 billion, a decrease of 3.2 per cent compared with the previous year's budget of $8.57 billion. Expenditure had decreased by 3.4 per cent, from $8.3 billion in 2014/15 to $8.02 billion in 2015/16. An amount of $0.28 billion had been unutilized. The year ended 30 June 2016 had been the third year of the preparation of the financial statements under IPSAS. By strengthening the preparation of the statements, the Administration had improved accuracy and reduced the number of errors requiring rectification.

56. Of the 31 recommendations made by the Board in 2014/15, 15 had been implemented, 5 had been overtaken by events, 10 were under implementation and 1 had been partially implemented. In the previous three financial years, 116 (81 per cent) of a total of 143 recommendations had been implemented, 10 (7 per cent) had been overtaken by events and 17 (12 per cent) were under implementation or had not been implemented. The Administration had addressed the Board's concerns and had enhanced financial control and management. Transparency, fairness and responsiveness in procurement had increased and the physical verification of expendable and non-expendable property had improved, but, as in previous years, more progress was needed in accounting, air operations, medical services and environmental and waste management. The financial position of peacekeeping was stable, with sufficient cash resources to sustain core operations.

57. In the financial statements submitted to the Board on 30 September 2016, the employee benefits liabilities had been understated by $440.1 million, which had resulted in an overstatement of net assets in the same amount. The misstatement had been caused by the late transmission of census data to the external actuary, the actuary's erroneous valuation of the liabilities and weaknesses in the Administration's review of the actuary's valuation. The financial statements had had to be revised twice as a result of the Board's audit.

58. The workplans defined for offices and sections of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations reflected the compacts of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Assistant Secretaries-General for Operations and for Rule of Law and Security Institutions and the Military Adviser for Peacekeeping Operations, and included objectives, expected accomplishments and performance measures. Most of the workplans were only partly suited to monitoring whether the activities of the offices and sections were appropriate for achieving the objectives set in the compacts. Restructuring the workplans and linking them to the compacts would enable the Department to fulfil its mandates more transparently and would allow management to improve staff efficiency.

59. The Department of Field Support had established a property management performance index to enhance the visibility of missions' property management and serve as an indicator of achievement in results-based budgeting. The index had revealed that missions had performed well in accountability but less well in stewardship. If the index was to prevent weaknesses in property management, the underlying data must be reliable, consistent and up to date. The Department must maintain data quality before and during the decommissioning of the Galileo inventory system in 2017 and help missions identify shortfalls and underperformance. The roles of the Strategic Air Operations Centre of the United Nations Global Service Centre and the Transportation and Movements Integrated Control Centre of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, in the coordination of air assets were unclear. Neither centre was involved in aircraft tasking, flight operations or flight safety, for which the missions remained fully responsible. Because of a lack of governance documents and the fact that the Aviation Manual 2005 had not been reviewed, the centres did not have the guidance necessary for their activities. Their standard operating procedures should be updated.

60. The Administration should intensify its efforts to establish a global acquisition plan. To maximize the opportunities provided by consolidated procurement, mission requirements must be analysed. The Administration should develop a procurement strategy on the basis of the plan. The Under-Secretary-General for Field Support had delegated procurement authority to the directors and chiefs of mission support, who had delegated it to their procurement staff. The Department of Field Support must ensure that it had an overview of missions' procurement sections, including their staffing and training. Monitoring procurement procedures was challenging because the Umoja business intelligence module was still under development; reports on systems contracts could not be produced in Umoja and the end-to-end procurement process could not be captured. Such deficiencies must be rectified.

61. Peacekeeping operations frequently hired consultants and individual contractors. To avoid unnecessary costs, missions should not consider awarding a contract until they had established that the work could not be done by staff. Work assignments requiring consultants or individual contractors should be described in greater detail, and their duration should be appraised more realistically. The justification for temporary duty assignments, under which staff were sent from one mission to another or between Headquarters and missions, was not always convincing. The Administration had analysed such assignments in missions in East and Central Africa but did not have complete data for other missions or for Headquarters. To avoid unnecessary travel costs and daily subsistence allowances, the Administration should monitor the use of such assignments.

62. Some medical units deployed by troop-contributing countries did not meet medical service requirements because they lacked drugs, consumables, experienced personnel, particularly in the field of endemic diseases, or doctors. The Administration should ensure that missions met their responsibilities for medical care, which was essential to the health and well-being of personnel.

63. Environmental issues were increasingly important for missions and were the subject of attention by internal and external observers. The Advisory Committee, in its previous report on cross-cutting issues related to peacekeeping operations (A/70/742), had recalled the General Assembly's request, in its resolution 69/307, for the Secretary-General to reduce the overall environmental footprint of each peacekeeping mission. Although the Department of Field Support and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had made efforts to ensure that missions followed their guidance on the matter, missions must do more to protect the environment by treating wastewater, using solar power, not allowing car engines to idle, using bus shuttles rather than cars and managing waste. In accordance with the Advisory Committee's request pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/286, the Board had published on its website a compilation of lessons learned from the global field support strategy.

64. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors concerning United Nations peacekeeping operations for the financial period ended 30 June 2016 (A/71/801), said that section II of the report contained additional information in response to the recommendations in the Board's report (A/71/5 (Vol. II)). The Secretary-General's report took into account the General Assembly's request in resolution 70/238 C for the Secretary-General to indicate an expected time frame for the implementation of the Board's recommendations. It included the level of priority given to, status of and office responsible for the implementation of the recommendations in the Board's current and previous reports. For the period ended 30 June 2016, the Secretariat had given high priority to the recommendations on the actuarial valuation of employee benefits liabilities; workplans of the Department of

Peacekeeping Operations; the preparation of the annual financial reports of welfare and recreation committees; asset and property management; standard costing of property, plant and equipment; the review of the useful lives of assets; air operations; medical services; and environmental and waste management.

65. In its report, the Board recommended that procurement officers and requisitioners should track, monitor and report on procurement procedures and that the Administration should help missions determine whether external consultants and individual contractors needed to be hired or the required expertise was available within the Organization; if in-house capacity could not be found, the Administration should develop a long-term strategy on the matter.

66. For the periods ended in June 2014 and June 2015, high priority had been given to the recommendations on budget formulation and management, asset management and monitoring, acquisition planning, inventory management, rotation of strategic deployment stocks, travel management, requirements for unmanned aerial vehicles, delays in procurement, information security, the use of information and communications technology assets, and the governance and mainstreaming of and cost-benefit analysis relating to the global field support strategy. The Administration had accepted all the Board's recommendations and had thoroughly reviewed their implementation. As at February 2017, 116 of the Board's 143 recommendations for the previous three financial periods had been implemented, 17 were under implementation and 10 had been overtaken by events.

67. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/71/845), said that the report contained the Advisory Committee's comments related to the Board's observations on budget formulation and management, asset and property management, the use of consultants, travel management and staff welfare. The Advisory Committee's report on observations and recommendations on cross-cutting issues related to United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/71/836) reflected the Board's observations regarding air operations, budgetary redeployments, environmental and waste management, human resources management and procurement. The Advisory Committee was of the view that its comments on the Board's findings were best considered in conjunction with its observations on cross-cutting issues. The Board's recommendations, whose overall rate of implementation had not improved, should be implemented in full and in a timely manner.

68. **Ms. Pereira Sotomayor** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the financial oversight provided by the Board of Auditors. The work of the Board complemented that of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit, and its report allowed the Committee to establish whether peacekeeping budgets were managed in such a way as to provide value for money. The Group noted the Secretary-General's report on implementation of the Board's recommendations (A/71/801). It had examined the Board's observations, comments and recommendations on the financial position and financial reporting, budget formulation and management, and human resources and asset management of peacekeeping operations.

69. For the 2015/16 period, 55 recommendations had been issued, compared to 31 for 2014/15, but some had been overtaken by events because of delays in implementation. The Administration should implement the Board's recommendations in full and in a timely manner. The Group would consider any proposal to facilitate implementation of recommendations that required General Assembly approval. The Board had reiterated some recommendations made in its previous reports; weaknesses, including omissions and inactivity, persisted in budget formulation, contracting, procurement, asset management and financial prudence, and should be addressed by the Secretariat. The Secretariat should provide sufficient information in a timely manner and conduct quality assurance to avoid the errors described in the Board's report. The Group was concerned about long-outstanding inter-agency accounts receivable, redeployments between and within expenditure groups, asset valuation, cost recovery management, over-reliance on consultants and individual contractors, fraud and presumptive fraud, non-compliance with the air travel management policy, and environmental and waste management.

Agenda item 149: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Updated financial position of closed peacekeeping missions as at 30 June 2016 (A/71/652 and A/71/856)

70. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the updated financial position of closed peacekeeping missions as at 30 June 2016 (A/71/652), said that the report provided information regarding 29 missions, including the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), the United Nations Mission in the Central

African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and the United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (UNSMIS), which had been closed since 2015. As at 30 June 2016, 5 missions had had net cash deficits, totalling $86.1 million, and 24 had had net cash surpluses, totalling $67.7 million. Pending the receipt of outstanding assessed contributions, troop-contributing countries were owed $62.9 million. Because the General Assembly had deferred consideration of the proposals in the reports of the Secretary-General at the sixty-sixth, sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions (A/66/665, A/67/739 and A/68/666) to address the outstanding dues to Member States in respect of contingent-owned equipment and letters of assist for closed missions with cash deficits, no new proposals were made in the current report.

71. While circumstances had improved in recent years, cash surpluses had been used to alleviate occasional shortfalls in active operations in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Peak borrowings, which usually occurred in July and August, had declined from $57 million in August 2013 to $40 million in July 2016. The balance of cross-borrowings at the end of December 2016 had been $26.0 million. The General Assembly was requested to consider the proposals made by the Secretary-General, in his reports on the updated financial position of closed peacekeeping missions at the sixty-seventh, sixty-eighth, sixty-ninth and seventieth sessions (A/67/739, A/68/666, A/69/659 and A/70/552), to address the cash requirements of active operations and, if no new mechanism was approved, to allow the retention of the net cash balance of $67.7 million available in 24 closed missions as at 30 June 2016.

72. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/71/856), said that the General Assembly, in its decision 70/553 C, had deferred until the current session consideration of the five previous reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/665, A/67/739, A/68/666, A/69/659 and A/70/552) and of the Advisory Committee (A/66/713, A/67/837, A/68/837, A/69/827 and A/70/829) on the updated financial position of closed peacekeeping missions, and reiterated its observations and recommendations on the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his five previous reports to settle outstanding liabilities in such missions. The General Assembly had repeatedly called for Member States to pay their assessed contributions on time, in full and without conditions. The decline in peak levels of borrowing by active peacekeeping missions reflected more timely receipt of such contributions. The Advisory Committee recommended that the net cash balance proposed for retention to cover the temporary borrowing needs of active missions should be reduced to $43.0 million, the highest level of borrowing in the previous three calendar years, and that any available cash surplus over that amount should be returned to Member States.

73. **Ms. Pereira Sotomayor** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that Member States were obliged under the Charter to pay their assessed contributions in full, without conditions and in a timely manner. Member States in arrears with their assessed contributions to closed peacekeeping missions should pay them expeditiously. The Group was concerned by the cash deficits in several closed missions as a result of Member States' non-payment of arrears, and by cross-borrowing from closed missions. By General Assembly resolution 65/293, the Secretary-General had been requested to submit proposals to address outstanding payments to Member States, particularly troop- and police-contributing countries, in respect of closed operations with cash deficits. The Committee should agree on a resolution that would sustainably address the matter.

Agenda item 153: Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (A/71/580, A/71/763 and A/71/836/Add.3)

Agenda item 160: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East

(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (A/71/631, A/71/781 and A/71/836/Add.2)

(b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (A/71/640, A/71/765, A/71/765/Corr.1 and A/71/836/Add.5)

Agenda item 162: Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (A/71/639, A/71/760, A/71/760/Corr.1 and A/71/836/Add.1)

74. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 (A/71/580) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/71/763) for UNFICYP, said that the proposed budget for 2017/18 amounted to $56.0 million, an increase of 2.2 per cent over the 2016/17 budget. The Force was important in maintaining a calm and secure environment and rebuilding trust between the

communities in Cyprus. Progress had been made in the negotiations between the leaders of the communities to find a settlement.

75. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 (A/71/631) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/71/781) for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), she said that the proposed 2017/18 budget of $62.3 million represented an increase of 30.5 per cent over the 2016/17 budget. In March 2017, the Advisory Committee had approved a request for the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in the amount of $8.8 million for the current period owing to the Force's return to its positions on the Bravo side of the area of separation.

76. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 (A/71/640) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/71/765 and A/71/765/Corr.1) for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), she said that the proposed 2017/18 budget of $494.8 million represented an increase of 1.2 per cent over the 2016/17 budget. The situation in the south of Lebanon was calm but fragile, and the Force's liaison and coordination role was particularly important.

77. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 (A/71/639) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/71/760 and A/71/760/Corr.1) for MINURSO, she said that the proposed 2017/18 budget of $55.2 million, exclusive of budgeted voluntary contributions in kind, represented a 5.0 per cent increase over the 2016/17 budget. The return of international staff members would allow the Mission to resume some of its core functions and overcome the operational challenges of the previous months.

78. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on UNFICYP (A/71/836/Add.3), said that the Advisory Committee's recommendations would entail a reduction of $459,800 in the Secretary-General's proposed 2017/18 budget. The civilian staffing review recommended by the Advisory Committee and endorsed in General Assembly resolution 70/273 had not been completed. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to complete the review before the submission of the 2018/19 budget proposal for the mission.

79. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on UNDOF (A/71/836/Add.2), he said that in the period 2017/18 the Force's highest priority would be its return to Camp Faouar. The Advisory Committee recommended reductions under official travel and facilities and infrastructure, and adjustments to the vacancy rates for civilian personnel.

80. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on UNIFIL (A/71/836/Add.5), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended the abolishment of 9 of the 19 posts proposed for reassignment, for whose functions insufficient justification had been provided; a more realistic vacancy rate for international staff; and a 20-per-cent reduction in the proposed resources for official travel. The Advisory Committee also made recommendations on facilities and infrastructure.

81. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on MINURSO (A/71/836/Add.1), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of almost $1,700,600 in the proposed 2017/18 budget. With regard to the proposed transfer of functions to the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, the Advisory Committee recommended that eight posts in the Finance and Budget Section and the Human Resources Section of MINURSO should be included in the 2017/18 budget for the mission rather than abolished, in view of the General Assembly's request for the Secretary-General to submit at the main part of the seventy-second session a report containing a comprehensive and fully developed proposal on the global service delivery model. The absence of 17 staff on special leave with full pay since March 2016 must be urgently addressed to minimize the cost to the Organization of paying salaries when services had not been rendered. The Advisory Committee was concerned by the lack of effort to assign the staff temporarily to other operations and expected the Secretary-General to update the General Assembly on the matter at the current session.

82. **Mr. Awad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the deployment of UNDOF had been necessitated by the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and the refusal of Israel to abide by Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for a full withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967, so that the financing of the Force was the responsibility of the Israeli aggressor in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1874 (S-IV). The Secretary-General's reports must be neutral, not politicized, and must reflect reality, but the reports on UNDOF used unclear language and ignored the reason for the deterioration in the security situation on the Bravo side, namely, terrorist operations carried out by armed terrorist groups affiliated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida, such as the Nusrah Front, that received direct and indirect

assistance from countries known to all, at the forefront of which was Israel, the occupying Power.

83. His delegation welcomed the return of UNDOF to some of the positions that it had previously abandoned. His Government had fully supported the Force's redeployment in the area of separation, from which it was working to expel the terrorists. The Committee should approve the resources needed for the Force to return to all its positions. His delegation objected to the fact that the Secretary-General had ignored many of the conditions on the ground and had characterized the crisis as a civil conflict and the terrorist groups as non-State armed groups, thereby disregarding the fact that the Security Council had designated those groups as terrorist groups. The report should be officially corrected, and future reports of the Secretary-General should reflect reality.

84. Compliance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the agreement governing the Force's basic operations was essential. The work of United Nations political or humanitarian missions in the region must not be allowed to overlap with that of UNDOF, which was military in nature and restricted to the monitoring of compliance with the Agreement and unrelated to Syrian domestic affairs. His delegation objected to the references in the Secretary-General's reports to continuing cooperation between UNDOF and the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria; such cooperation exceeded the Force's mandate and ignored the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the agreement governing the Force's basic operations. The work of UNDOF had no connection with the political process and the Office of the Special Envoy.

85. His Government had welcomed UNDOF since its establishment and had supported the Disengagement of Forces Agreement as a temporary measure pending implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981) and an end to the occupation of the Golan, and not as an alternative to a lasting settlement. It condemned the Israeli acts of aggression against Syria of 17 March and 27 April 2017, provocations that showed that Israel had no respect for international law. His Government acknowledged the noble mission of UNDOF and paid tribute to the countries that contributed to the Force.

86. **Mr Wax** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, paid tribute to peacekeeping personnel, who often worked in dangerous circumstances. He said that the challenges of financing peacekeeping must be addressed so that missions could implement their mandates, and his delegation welcomed the Secretariat's innovative approach to the increasingly complex threats. That approach must be continually updated on the ground and at Headquarters so that peacekeepers had the equipment, technology and medical training to perform their mandates safely. Missions must reduce their environmental footprint through waste management, clean energy and sustainable water production. While their activities were essential, their efficiency must be enhanced.

87. The accusations of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic were absurd while the Syrian Government opposed the essence of peacekeeping by prolonging violence in its own country. The Syrian Arab Republic was far from meeting its peacekeeping obligations when UNDOF personnel had been kidnapped in the country, leading to the Force's withdrawal from its positions. It was unsurprising that the Syrian representative had attempted to divert attention from the Syrian Government's use of conventional and unconventional weapons against its own civilians by making such statements at a meeting of the Committee. With many terrorist organizations and the army of the Syrian Arab Republic in close proximity to the northern borders of Israel, the Israeli Government understood the importance of peacekeeping and looked forward to supporting the work of peacekeeping troops.

88. **Mr. Awad** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation rejected the remarks of the representative of Israel regarding the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. It was used to hearing such comments, which were designed to divert attention from the occupation of the Syrian Golan and the funding of UNDOF. The time allocated to the Committee was too short to detail the crimes of Israel against the Palestinians and Syrians who had lived under Israeli occupation for the previous half century. The General Assembly, the Security Council and all other United Nations institutions had adopted many resolutions condemning those crimes. The representative of Israel would not, however, be able to divert attention from his country's crimes by drawing attention to the Syrian crisis, although Israel and the other States responsible for the crisis had been working with the armed terrorist groups to prolong it. As documented in various reports of the Secretary-General, it was Israel and other well-known States that had kidnapped the UNDOF personnel. The representative of Israel was mistaken if he believed that the crisis would make the Syrian people lose sight of who was their true enemy or make them forget their territory in the occupied Syrian Golan, which would sooner or later be returned to the Syrian Arab Republic.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.